DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 097 595 CG 009 211

AUTHOR Hillman, Bill W.; And Others
TITLE Activity Group Guidance: A Developmental Approach for Counselors.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Activity Learning; Adolescents; Counselors; *Developmental Guidance; *Group Activities; *Group Counseling; Program Descriptions; Self Actualization

ABSTRACT

This document discusses Activity Group Guidance (AGG) which is viewed as a useful tool for counselors who wish to include developmental guidance as part of their programs. AGG is a process in which group participants experience and discuss one or more guidance principles through the planning and completing of some task or project. One group purpose calls for the leader and group members to work together to complete the task. A second purpose is to use the group process and experiences involved in completing the project to learn a guidance principle. The content of AGG includes a planned cognitive and/or psychomotor activity with an affective focus. The three stages usually involved in the process of implementing a group session are: (1) warmup discussion, (2) activity implementation, and (3) followup discussion. The author describes and evaluates a comprehensive AGG program. Specific suggestions are offered to counselors who wish to start activity groups in their own schools. (Author/PC)

ED 097595

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE:

A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH FOR COUNSELORS

Dr. Bill W. Hillman
Associate Professor of Counseling
and Guidance
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

Mr. John T. Penczar, Counselor
Wakefield Junior High School
Tucson Public Schools
Tucson, Arizona

Dr. Reginald Barr, Coordinator
Health and Nutrition Services
Tucson Public Schools
Tucson, Arizona

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Please send correspondence to:
Dr. Bill W. Hillman
7061 E. Soyaluna Place
Tucson, Arizona 85715

This article is based in part on a program entitled "Activity Group Guidance: Description, Demonstration, Participation" which was presented at the 1974 A.P.G.A. Convention.

CG 009 211

ABSTRACT

The authors suggest that Activity Group Guidance can be a useful tool for counselors who wish to include developmental guidance as a part of their role. The content, process, and group dynamics of Activity Group Guidance are presented. A comprehensive Activity Group Guidance program is described and evaluated. Specific suggestions are given to counselors who wish to start Activity Groups in their own schools.

ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE:
A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH FOR COUNSELORS

In many schools students who do not have serious problems are largely ignored by their counselors, even though these students do have very real guidance needs. They can profit by learning how to make decisions, accept responsibility, get along with others, and apply a hundred other guidance principles which will help them become adequate adults. The authors believe that one of the most important roles of the school counselor should be to serve as a guidance specialist who provides a comprehensive developmental guidance program. Rather than serving as a therapist who facilitates a cure for an illness, this developmental guidance specialist provides guidance information and teaches skills for processing that information. Activity Group Guidance can be a useful tool for counselors with this developmental orientation.

WHAT IS ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE?

Activity Group Guidance is an adaptation of play therapy techniques which have been used successfully in clinical settings (Axline, 1947; Ginott, 1961; Moustakas, 1955). Activity group therapists have emphasized that work with children is most effective when it takes place in a natural setting which provides an opportunity for behavior change (Blakeman and Day, 1969; Galkin, 1937; Moreno, 1946). Alexander (1964), Blakeman (1967), Day (1967), and Komechak (1971) have effectively applied the activity group concept to counseling in schools, but again the emphasis of each focused on children with serious problems.

Activity Group Guidance is a process in which participants of a group experience and discuss one or more guidance principles through the planning

and completing of some task or project. One purpose for the group is for the leader and group members to work together in order to complete the activity. A second purpose of the group is to use the group process and experiences involved in completing the project to learn a guidance principle.

Activity Group Guidance combines some aspects of group counseling (Blakeman and Day, 1969) with the sound teaching strategy of learning through experience (Carswell and Roubinek, 1974: Holt, 1972; Silberman, 1973; and Weber, 1971). Ideally, guidance becomes an important part of every curricular area. In practice this does not usually happen unless a program such as Activity Group Guidance is set up to provide a means for consciously integrating guidance content into the existing curricula. Activity Group Guidance provides an opportunity for the counselor and teacher to develop a program which integrates basic guidance principles into the curriculum in such a way that the affective and cognitive domains are treated as a unified whole (Brown, 1971; Keat, 1974).

WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE?

The content of Activity Group Guidance includes a planned cognitive and/or psychomotor activity with an affective focus. Potential subjects for activities are limited only by the imagination of the leader.

Activity groups may be part of a special guidance curriculum developed cooperatively by teachers and the counselor. For example, a guidance unit on understanding feelings might include an Activity Group Guidance session of making a collage with faces that express emotions. A guidance unit on encouragement could involve an activity of planning and staging a play which gives the group an opportunity to learn and use the encouragement process.

Activity groups may be utilized as a part of a unit of study in the existing curriculum of any subject. For example, in a math class an activity designed to develop word problems that have an affective as well as a cognitive solution can become a foundation for discussion of the guidance concept of problem solving. In a physical education class a series of lessons may involve the student in developing, teaching, and learning new games which can provide an excellent opportunity to explore guidance principles such as sharing, decision-making, leadership, and cooperation.

Some schools have set aside a block of time each week for interest groups or clubs. These groups can be developed easily into Guidance Activity Groups if the leaders are trained to implement the guidance aspect of the program. An interest group for training student crosswalk guards may become a vehicle for the discussion of mutual respect and responsibility, or a choral group may provide an excellent setting for developing the guidance principles of working together and acceptance of self and others.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS USED IN ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE?

The three stages usually involved in the process of implementing Activity Group Guidance sessions are: 1. Warm-up discussion, 2. Doing the activity, and 3. Follow-up discussion. If time is limited, and flexibility is desired, one or more of these stages may be omitted during some activity group sessions.

Stage 1: Warm-up Discussion

During the warm-up discussion, the leader begins a dialogue with the group about the basic guidance principle to be emphasized in the activity group session. This discussion sets the tone for the activity which will follow. If encouragement is the focus for a given session, the group members may become

more aware of how their behavior can be encouraging or discouraging to others and can better recognize when some one is trying to encourage them.

Also during the warm-up stage, the group and the leader agree on the specific objectives which they wish to accomplish during the session. These goals involve the completion of the activity and implementation of the guidance principles to be stressed. The group and leader develop the specific steps needed to accomplish their stated objectives. The leader usually needs to give clear directions or possibly model the skills necessary for completing the activity.

Stage 2: Doing the Activity

The group members generally work together to accomplish their task during this stage. However, some participants may work independently on a project. The leader works with the group and observes their behavior and interactions. His observations about the interaction may provide some of the content for the follow-up discussion. As the leader interacts with the group he may give feed-back to some of the participants concerning the guidance principle being stressed. As incidents occur which can provide an opportunity for learning of guidance principles, the whole group or a part of the group may talk about it while working on the group project. If a major crisis develops, the group may stop work on their projects and work together to solve their concern. The primary objective during this stage, however, is informal interaction in a natural setting rather than formal discussions.

Stage 3: Follow-up Discussion

The follow-up discussion is the key part of Activity Group Guidance. During this dialogue the group and leader discuss the activity they have just completed and the guidance principle involved. Emphasis is placed on the

thoughts, feelings and actions of the participants. The group evaluates the extent to which their stated goals and objectives were reached. When necessary, plans are made to modify subsequent sessions in order to better accomplish their goals. During the discussion, group members may be helped to understand the purpose of their own behavior (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1973; Dreikurs, et al., 1971). Interpersonal skills also may be learned for helping other members of the group to improve their behavior and attitudes.

WHAT GROUP DYNAMICS ARE NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITY GUIDANCE GROUPS?

There are a number of dynamics within an activity group which may influence whether or not the experience will be a success. The authors believe that for the activity group to be optimally productive the atmosphere must be democratic rather than authoritarian or permissive (Dreikurs et al, 1971; White and Lippit, 1960). Democracy as utilized in Activity Group Guidance implies an atmosphere of mutual respect in which children have freedom with responsibility. Within this atmosphere children are given choices within limits which they may help to develop, and are allowed to experience the consequences of the choice they have made (Dreikurs and Gray, 1968).

Group cohesiveness is more likely to develop when the tone of the group is based on an attitude of mutual help and encouragement (Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs, 1963). If the group is to be cohesive, it is extremely important for the members and the leader to have a common purpose or objective for each session.

To be effective, the group leader must not operate as the "boss" of the group nor can he abdicate his responsibility by acting only as an observer. He needs to be very much involved in the activity, and serve as a facilitator and model who helps the group members solve their own difficulties. Choice of

leaders for activity groups may be flexible. Activity Group Guidance programs have been successfully led by counselors, teachers, and trained lay or para-professional leaders including college students, and parents (Hillman and Bowlus, 1971).

Activity groups may vary in size according to the leader's objective and the activity involved. Groups of 8-10 children work very well in most situations, but groups may be smaller or larger to meet specific needs. A typical classroom group may be divided into 3 or 4 activity groups, but Activity Group Guidance for the whole class is also a very effective procedure. The authors have found that it is best to organize groups so that there is a mix of sexes and personalities. Variety in the composition of the group stimulates more productive interaction and personal growth.

A COMPREHENSIVE ACTIVITY GROUP GUIDANCE PROGRAM IN ACTION

The authors have been involved in the implementation of Activity Group Guidance in a wide variety of settings (Barr, et al., 1973; Hillman, Penczar and Barr, 1974). The most extensive of these programs was part of an ESEA Title III project in Humboldt County, California directed by the senior author. The purpose of the total project was to produce a comprehensive developmental guidance program for grades kindergarten through eight. The program involved classroom guidance discussions, Activity Group Guidance and small group counseling (Hillman and Bowlus, 1971).

The most successful segment of the program was Activity Group Guidance. All children in the three small project schools who were in grades 2 through 6 were in about 25 Activity Guidance Groups. Typically, each classroom was divided into three or four activity groups of about seven or eight boys and

girls. Each group had two leaders, one male and one female university graduate student majoring in counseling, psychology or education. The activity groups met each week for about 45 minutes throughout the school year. The general objective of each group was to create a relaxed atmosphere where the children could develop the skills necessary for good interpersonal relationships with like and opposite sex peers, parents, teachers, and other adults. The groups most frequently were involved in activities which centered around arts and crafts, cooking, and drama.

Two approaches were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Activity Group Guidance program (Hillman and Bowlus, 1971). The Activity Group leaders were carefully trained to observe and record critical behavior exhibited by the children in their groups. These observations were then used to make ratings on six dimensions of social behavior including: 1. Participation in group activity, 2. Self-assertiveness with peers, 3. Respect for others, 4. Valuation by peers, 5. Interaction with adult leaders, and 6. Emotional expression. Each of the six dimensions was rated on a nine point scale. The highest (best adjustment) score possible on the scale was 54, and the lowest (poorest adjustment) score was 6. Initial ratings were made in the fall after four activity group sessions and final ratings were made in May after an average of 23 sessions. The children at all grade levels, 2 through 6, made substantial gains in the quality of their behavior in the activity group sessions as rated by the adult leaders. The beginning average rating achieved by the total sample was 29.25 and the final average rating was 37.75.

In a second evaluation procedure, all children participating in the Activity Group Guidance Program were asked, in May, to complete an open-ended questionnaire concerning their reaction to the groups. The children were very enthu-

siastic, and 100% of the respondents said they wanted to continue in the program the following year. Obviously much more sophisticated evaluation procedures are needed before definite conclusions can be made about the effectiveness of Activity Group Guidance, but this evaluation does indicate that the Humboldt program was a success in the opinion of the leaders and children involved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Counselors who wish to emphasize their role as a developmental guidance specialist should find that Activity Group Guidance is a valuable tool. To initiate such a program the counselor will have several responsibilities. At first he will need to serve as a leader for several activity groups so that he can learn the process and feel comfortable with it. When he is leading a group, the counselor will be a model for others who may lead groups in the future. Second, the counselor will need to recruit and provide training for group leaders, including: teachers, parents, college students, para-professionals, or older students. Part of this training would include counselor demonstrations of Activity Group Guidance. Third, the counselor will be a resource of activity ideas, materials, and guidance principles for lay leaders. Finally, the counselor's main responsibility will be to organize and coordinate the Activity Group Guidance Program.

Activity Guidance Groups provide an excellent way to identify students who need the special attention which individual or group counseling provides. Many times parent or teacher consultation will be an outgrowth of an activity group. Methods which have been successful in working with a child in an activity group may be shared with the teacher or parent.

The authors have discovered that Activity Group Guidance is a valuable procedure which can put new vitality into a school guidance and counseling program. We hope that you will try some of the ideas presented here and share the results with us.

REFERENCES

Alexander, E. D., School centered play therapy program. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 1964, 43, 256-261.

Axline, V. M., Play therapy. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1947.

Barr, R. E., Penczar, J. T., Lovitt, D. M. and Hillman, B. W., Activity group guidance: Judo. Unpublished video tape, Tucson, Arizona Public Schools, 1973.

Blakeman, J. D., The effects of activity group counseling on the self evaluation and classroom behavior of adolescent behavior problem boys. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, 1967.

Blakeman, J. D., and Day, S. R., Activity group counseling. In Gazda, G. M. (Ed.) Theories and methods of group counseling in the schools. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1969.

Brown, G. I., Human teaching for human learning: An introduction to confluent education. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

Carswell, E. M. and Roubinek, D. L., Open sesame: A primer in open education. Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear, 1974.

Day, S. R., The effects of activity group counseling on selected behavior characteristics of culturally disadvantaged boys. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia, 1967.

Dinkmeyer, D. C. and Dreikurs, R., Encouraging children to learn. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall. 1963.

Dinkmeyer, D. C. and McKay, G. D., Raising a responsible child. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973.

Dreikurs, R. and Gray, L., Logical consequences: A new approach to discipline. New York: Hawthorn Press, 1968.

Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B. B., and Pepper, F. C., Maintaining sanity in the classroom. New York: Harper-Row, 1971.

Galkin, J., The possibilities offered by the summer camp as a supplement to the child guidance clinic. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1937, 7, 474-483.

Ginott, H. G., Group psychotherapy with children. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961.

Hillman, B. W. and Bowlus, D., Developing and implementing a program that provides a basis for social and emotional growth, Title III ESEA: Final report. Trinidad, California, Union School District, 1971.

Hillman, B. W., Penczar, J. T., and Barr, R. E., Activity Group Guidance: Description, demonstration, participation. APGA Convention Summaries, Abstracts, and Research Reports, 1974, p. 76.

Holt, J., Freedom and beyond. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972.

Keat, D. E., Fundamentals of child counseling. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974.

Komechak, M. G., The activity-interaction group: A process for short-term counseling with elementary school children. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 1971, 6, 13-20.

Moreno, J. L., Psychodrama: The principle of spontaneity. Vol. 1 New York: Beacon House. 1946.

Moustakas, C. E., Emotional adjustment and the play therapy process. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1955, 86, 79-99.

Silberman, C. E.: Ed. The open classroom reader. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Webber, L., The English infant school and informal education. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

White, R. and Lippit, R., Leader behavior and member reaction in three social climates. In Cartwright, D. and Zander, A. (eds.) Group dynamics: Research and theory. Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1960.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
TUCSON, ARIZONA 85721

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE

July 30, 1974

Dr. Leo Goldman, Editor
Personnel and Guidance Journal
1607 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Dr. Goldman:

Enclosed you will find an article entitled "Activity Group Guidance: A Developmental Approach for Counselors" which I have written with John Penczar and Reginald Barr. We would like to submit this article for publication in The Personnel and Guidance Journal.

Our program at the 1974 A.P.G.A. convention on this subject was very well received. One of the guidance publishing houses has asked us to develop a guidance kit based on the concept of Activity Group Guidance. We feel that the material presented in the article will be of interest and value to your readers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill W. Hillman

Bill W. Hillman, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

BWH:rc

Encl.